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## HAND-WORK IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

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PERHAPS the most important problem that confronts the educational world of today is just what shall be taught in the elementary schools where the greatest number of our children are trained.

Up to the past few years the kindergarten has been the only natural school. Many of us have been under the impression that child-nature utterly changed upon entering the first grade; so the natural activities were promptly discontinued and the dreary, mechanical processes for the education of these young children as promptly begun, teachers in these primary grades teaching with infinite patience, many things the children would have found out for themselves a year or so later. But now the spirit of Froebel is penetrating this waste desert of the elementary school, and changes are coming into schools of every grade. So the kindergarten methods have won their places, and wood, chalk, clay, scissors, tools, etc., are in use to make young fingers deft.

These changes began at the top of our educational system and are fast working downward. All these new buildings which have appeared of late in all our thriving colleges and universities — these workrooms and laboratories — show that a liberal education means skill in getting and using knowledge; that wisdom comes from searching books and searching nature; that in the finest human natures the brain and the hand are in close league.

The future of hand-work or self-expression is the future of all elementary education. It may be called the entering wedge to the new American development.

Arnold has said: "Religion is morality touched with emotion." We might say that the kindergarten is activity touched with sentiment, but self-directed to be of educational value. Creation is said to be the highest activity of the mind; so the

child who is trained to create is trained to think, to explore all the questions of the past and the present. These single creations in the kindergarten and primary school, crude as they usually are, but expressing the individuality of the child who made them, mean opening the way into personal freedom, as self-expression is the essential element of liberty.

Froebel believed that the three primal race-occupations— weaving for clothing, planting for food, and building for shelter —were necessary for normal development. May we not make these occupations, and the activities connected with them, a basis through which we may bring the children to a better understanding of the other subjects contained in the school curriculum?

In this article I shall try to touch upon some of the vital questions which present themselves in the teaching of this hand-work in our public schools, where we are hampered by too many pupils for one teacher and an overcrowded course of study. As the present course of study is arranged in the average public school, it is impossible to do very much more than merely to teach some form of hand-work in each grade; but even in its isolated form it is sure to appeal to those most interested in such a way that later the educational value may be easily demonstrated.

But this hand-work can never be a thing in itself; it must be a part of the whole and every teacher must have something to do with it, as it is only when it fits into a general scheme that it becomes valuable and educational. Therefore I think the supervisors of primary work, drawing, and manual training, should plan a course of study for the elementary school. These three persons must then work together with the assistance and co-operation of the grade teachers, and I feel sure that the best results will follow.

It is impossible for us to do this all at once, or to fashion an iron-clad course of study; but it is the duty of every teacher to accept what is commonly called truth in modern pedagogy, and then each one must work out the scheme that will best fit his own particular field. I would suggest here that a plan for correlation of subjects be tried in one building, and the results carefully noted and demonstrated.

Another question of great importance is: Should boys and girls have the same kind of hand-work? Pedagogically speaking, I do not see any good reason why boys and girls should not all have the same kind of hand-work; but with the present course of study it seems advisable to give the children of the first four grades a variety of hand-work of the same kind for boys and girls—a variety that shall cover the range of young children's interest and bring them in contact with many materials and processes. The girls of the fifth and sixth grades may sew and do some work in designing and making baskets. The boys of the fifth and sixth grades also take the basketry-work and do the knife-work in thin woods. Some work in Venetian iron-work may also be brought in in these grades.

I do not consider the above work, as outlined for the boys of the fifth and sixth grades, sufficient to develop their resistive powers. I believe they can do much more, and that tool-work should be at least a part of their work in manual training. But here again the public-school problem faces us. The work in the first six grades is usually and necessarily done in the regular schoolroom. I look forward to the time when all our school buildings shall contain reasonably well-equipped shops and laboratories in which to teach these activities, as they are related to the course of study. Then our hand-work need not be confined to certain grades.

I am planning now to have the boys in the fifth and sixth grades make a simple equipment, such as benches, cabinets, etc.; and where the buildings have an extra room that may be used, we hope gradually to fit up a crude shop where the work of these grades may be done. The boys will learn many valuable lessons in fitting up these shops, and, besides learning that a great deal can be done with a simple equipment, when they get to the seventh- and eighth-grade shops, where a complete equipment is furnished because here more technique is essential, they will fully appreciate the value of the more elaborate equipment.

The girls of the seventh and eighth grades take domestic science.

If we could have more time and money for these grades, I

should strongly urge that boys and girls of these grades take both shop-work and domestic science; as in the interest of an all-around culture, as well as an intelligent understanding of the human body and its physical nourishment and development, it is so essential that the pupils of this age be given these forms of manual training.

In the wood-work of these grades, we have a fine opportunity to cultivate in these pupils a love for trees, woods, and furniture of different countries. Much of their history may consist of comparisons of these subjects.

Then, too, the principle of service may be brought in. Let the children make some article that mother and father will use and value. The sentiment thus interwoven is not an idle one. It is said that all the great and beautiful things made and done in the world—the great pictures, symphonies, poems, stories, buildings that have needed the human spirit—were done as a result of sentiment—the sentiment of hope and love.

Visitors to the Palace of Education and Social Economy at the World's Fair may be interested in studying the exhibits of a few schools, where it seemed to me correlation of subjects had been emphasized. Papers containing illustrated work in school gardening and nature-study done in the Hyannis State Normal School, in Massachusetts, were most interesting. A scheme for elementary geography, nature-study, and literature, based upon some related activities, as illustrated and done by the children of the public schools of Salt Lake City, Utah, was very suggestive and showed excellent results. A historical rug, designed, planned, and woven by the students of the Utah State Normal School, at Salt Lake City, representing the history of the development of the state, and made for a present for the president of the school, told the story of the unified plan for the correlation of subjects as being worked out by these progressive people with admirable results.

I found the written work of the public schools of St. Louis quite in harmony with the idea of correlation, although they have not as yet attempted to emphasize the relation of their constructive work to the other subjects in their curriculum. The

constructive work of the kindergartens of Louisville, Ky., seemed to me the most practical and educational I have seen.

The correlation of art and manual training was very marked in the high-school exhibits of St. Paul and Minneapolis, some beautiful and artistic work being shown.

I believe many cities are alive to the fact that related work is necessary; but just how it shall be done has not as yet been proved to their satisfaction.

To do much toward the reconstruction of our course of study, we shall need to omit two classes of study altogether to make room for better things. We must omit, first, those subjects that are abstract; and, secondly, those that are involved in other subjects. We should then have left the speaking, reading, writing of English, and of either French or German, science and free-hand drawing, physical culture, including sports of all kinds, music and dramatic expression. Basing all these on the related activities, it seems to me we shall be able to produce vigorous bodies and warm hearts, as well as informed minds.

Our country is waking up to the necessity of a change in our methods of instruction in public schools. Let us as teachers be the leaders in the movement which shall give us larger school buildings, ampler playgrounds, summer-vacation schools, a gymnasium in every school building, less pupils for one teacher, salaries that shall attract the best talent our colleges and universities afford—teachers whose inspiration is the love of little children and interest in their development into all-around good citizens—the object of all education.